

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as indicated below.

1. (Currently Amended) A method for evaluating a password proposed by a user during an enrollment process, comprising:
  - receiving said proposed password from said user;
  - performing an Internet search using a query containing one or more keywords derived from said proposed password, wherein said Internet search searches contents of the Internet across a plurality of web sites using a search engine tool;
  - evaluating results of said search relative to one or more predefined thresholds; and
  - rejecting said proposed password when said user is correlated with said proposed password if one or more of said predefined thresholds are exceeded by said results.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether that said proposed password can be qualitatively correlated with said user.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said proposed password can be quantitatively correlated with said user.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said proposed password is comprised of a proposed answer and a proposed hint and wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said proposed answer can be correlated with said proposed hint in a particular relation.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein said particular relation is selected from the group consisting essentially of: self, family member, co-author, teammate, colleague, neighbor, community member or household member.
6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said proposed password is comprised of a proposed answer and a proposed hint and wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said proposed answer can be obtained from said proposed hint.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said proposed password is an identifying number.
8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said identifying number identifies a person in a particular relationship to said user.
9. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said identifying number is a top N most commonly used identifying number.
10. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said identifying number identifies a top N commercial entity.
11. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said identifying number identifies said user.
12. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein said identifying number is a portion of a telephone number.

13. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein said identifying number is a portion of an address.
14. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein said identifying number is a portion of social security number.
15. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said proposed password is a word.
16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether a correlation between said word and said user exceeds a predefined threshold.
17. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said correlation is determined by performing a meta-search.
18. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said step of ensuring a correlation further comprises the step of performing a meta-search.
19. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said step of ensuring a correlation further comprises the step of performing a local proximity evaluation.
20. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said step of ensuring a correlation further comprises the step of performing a number classification.
21. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for evaluating a password proposed by a user during an enrollment process, comprising:
  - a memory; and
  - at least one processor, coupled to the memory, operative to:
    - receive said proposed password from said user;

perform an Internet search using a query containing one or more keywords derived from said proposed password, wherein said Internet search searches contents of the Internet across a plurality of web sites using a search engine tool;

evaluate results of said search relative to one or more predefined thresholds; and

reject said proposed password when said user is correlated with said proposed password if one or more of said predefined thresholds are exceeded by said results.

22. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said proposed password can be correlated with said user.

23. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein said proposed password is comprised of a proposed answer and a proposed hint and wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said proposed answer can be correlated with said proposed hint in a particular relation.

24. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein said proposed password is comprised of a proposed answer and a proposed hint and wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said proposed answer can be obtained from said proposed hint.

25. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein said proposed password is an identifying number.

26. (Original) The apparatus of claim 25, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said identifying number identifies a person in a particular relationship to said user.

27. (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture for evaluating a password proposed by a user during an enrollment process, comprising a machine readable recordable medium containing one or more programs which when executed by a computer implement the steps of:

receiving said proposed password from said user;

performing an Internet search using a query containing one or more keywords derived from said proposed password, wherein said Internet search searches contents of the Internet across a plurality of web sites using a search engine tool;

evaluating results of said search relative to one or more predefined thresholds; and

rejecting said proposed password when said user is correlated with said proposed password if one or more of said predefined thresholds are exceeded by said results.